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SUBJECT: DRC ELECTION CAMPAIGN UPDATE

REF: KINSHASA 1578

¶1. (U) Summary: Four days into the DRC's second-round presidential campaign, preparations are on track for the October 29 vote. Ballots and voting materials are being delivered, while training of poll workers is entering its final stages. The general mood of the country remains calm, although several scattered incidents of limited violence have taken place. End summary.

LOGISTICS ON TRACK

¶2. (U) Officials of the DRC's Independent Electoral Commission told representatives of international donors on October 17 that preparations for the October 29 presidential run-off and provincial assembly elections are well underway with no major logistical problems. Flavien Misoni, the head of the CEI's Bureau of National Operations, said all ballots, tabulation sheets, and other paperwork have been delivered on time to the 209 distribution sites across the country.

¶3. (U) The chiefs of voting centers have just finished their own training sessions with CEI and MONUC personnel. During the next week they will transport the election materials to the 50,045 voting stations, and begin training the nearly 250,000 poll workers. The CEI began delivering election kits and ballots October 16 to the 8,523 voting stations in Kinshasa, and expects to complete work here before October 27.

¶4. (SBU) Misoni said one minor problem that has arisen in the last week concerns the payment of salaries to electoral agents. In a few locations in the provinces of Orientale and Katanga, the heads of voting centers are refusing to deliver campaign materials because they claim they have not received their salaries, nor those of workers under their supervision.

¶5. (SBU) According to Misoni, the agency charged with distributing the funds gave the money to the wrong CEI officials. Instead of the heads of the voting centers, the funds were given to those charged with training them, despite clear instructions from the Commission. Misoni said officials in Kinshasa are working to resolve the situation, adding that it should not have a significant impact on the electoral calendar or the delivery of material in these areas.

¶6. (U) On October 16 the government of Angola extended the lease of four helicopters to the CEI for the transport of materials in the interior of the country. The Angolan ambassador to the DRC said the helicopters would be at the disposal of the Commission until November 15 to assist in the collection of ballots after the vote. The helicopters were

first put into service in early August to aid the Commission in retrieving material after the first round elections July 30.

BEMBA REFUSES TO CAMPAIGN IN EASTERN DRC

17. (U) Yves Kisombe, a spokesman for Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba, told MONUC-sponsored Radio Okapi October 16 that Bemba will not campaign in eastern DRC due to security concerns. Kisombe said unspecified security conditions in that part of the country had not yet been resolved. He said that security is not just a concern for Bemba, noting that President Kabila did not travel to the provinces Bandundu or Equateur (both with strong Bemba support) because of a lack of security. Kisombe called on both camps to ensure that tolerance is encouraged throughout the country.

ISOLATED INCIDENTS IN OPENING DAYS OF CAMPAIGN

18. (U) A handful of security incidents have occurred since the presidential campaign opened at midnight on October 13 (reftel). In Mbandaka, the provincial capital of Equateur, supporters of Bemba and Kabila clashed October 14 after a PPRD campaign rally. According to news reports, fistfights broke out between the partisans of both camps after alleged PPRD supporters tore down posters of Bemba outside MLC party headquarters. One PPRD supporter was reportedly seriously wounded in the incident. One MLC partisan was arrested by

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the police the same day in Mbandaka after violating the campaign code of conduct, reportedly using hate speech during a local radio interview.

19. (U) Also on October 14, members of the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU) in Kinshasa were harassed by a group of "shegues" (Congolese street gangs) in the city's downtown area. A PALU spokesman said his party was leaving a regular meeting at the French embassy when they were set upon by a group of shegues. Police arrived several minutes later to break up the incident, which left one of the assailants injured. PALU has officially formed a coalition to support President Kabila in the second-round election.

10. (U) On October 16, Kabila and Bemba supporters were involved in a security incident in Lodja, approximately 550 miles east of Kinshasa, in Eastern Kasai province. CEI provincial coordinator Abbe Alain Lomandja told us that during a meeting of the Union for the Nation (Bemba's political alliance), supporters from the Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP, the pro-Kabila coalition) entered the stadium where the rally was taking place and began stoning the participants.

11. (U) Lomandja said three police officers and three civilians were wounded -- two seriously -- during the fight. While the situation in Lodja on October 17 was calm, Lomandja said the AMP was planning on holding a protest march against the recent attack on She Okitundu in London last week. He added that a local radio station owned by Bemba was also broadcasting "hate messages."

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